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MARTIN LUTHER,

A POEM.

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PATERNOSTER-ROW.
1825.

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TO

THE MEMORY

OF A

REVERED AND LAMENTED PARENT,

THIS POEM

IS INSCRIBED,

BY

AN AFFECTIONATE DAUGHTER.

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PART I.

ARGUMENT.

Invocation to Truth—Its secret influence upon Pagan philosophy—Socrates—Plato—Zoroaster—Confucius—The Christian Revelation—Progress of error in the Church—Its state in the time of Luther—His taste for classical studies—He accidentally meets with a copy of the Holy Scriptures, and is deeply affected by its contents—Luther's sickness—He is visited by an old Monk who consoles and supports his mind—Luther is sent to Rome upon a mission—View of that city—He meets a splendid procession and is deeply impressed with its idolatrous nature—Luther's reflections—He completes his business and takes his leave.

MARTIN LUTHER.

"It was upon him and his soul that the fate of Europe depended—
"He was the man of his age and nation."..... SCHLEGEL.

PART I.

O! Thou bright Seraph—which in heav'n art known,
The chosen watchman round Jehovah's throne!
Supreme intelligence of yonder Sphere,
Say—can a mortal strain arrest thine ear?
Far from thy sight, in baffled rage, retire
Pale slander's brood, and falsehood's baneful fire;
Error, with all her changeful shapes, hath fled,
And the thick film, which envy's pow'rs had spread,
Touch'd by thy ray, deceitful phantoms seem,
The vanish'd shades of some delusive dream.

Immortal Truth! then let me chaunt thy praise,
And in this breast, thy votive altars raise,
Inspire my lay—for though the task be mine,
The muse's consecrated pow'rs are thine.

Spirit divine! which, unperceiv'd, didst teach
Th' inquiring mind, a great first cause to reach—
Through the dim shades of Pagan darkness came
Thy flashing beams, and lit a kindred flame;
Hence Socrates,* his god-like pow'rs deriv'd,
And to the depth of human wisdom div'd;
Hence Plato sought, by brighter hopes allur'd,
To clear the path, a barbarous age obscur'd;
Trod the rude steps of science, yet unknown,
And gave philosophy a purer tone—
Struck by thy light, the Persian sage† began
To mould anew, the magi's mystic plan:
No more uncertain fate's capricious train,
Throw in life's scale, alternate bliss or pain:

* B. C. 467. † Zoroaster, B. C. 510.

From the material universe, to Thee,
Source of all good! he bent the suppliant knee—
Thus, when his country, wise Confucius* saw
Forsake their old traditionary law,
The sage, dissolv'd in patriotic tears,
In mild expostulation, spoke his fears:
Claim'd no divine commission, but reviv'd
The faith, from patriarchal laws deriv'd.

Bright star of Truth! more brilliant still thy course,
When heav'n reveal'd its uncreated source;
When prophet minstrels swept the glowing lyre,
When bold apostles spake, with tongues of fire;
When the pale sophist, and the vengeful scribe,
Beheld the lion spring from Judah's tribe,—
He broke the flimsy web—He snatch'd the prey
From rude licentious hands—He led the way,
So long conceal'd, where heav'nly wisdom lies,
And gave, to man, his birthright of the skies.

* Before Christ, 551 years.

Illustrious Martyr! from thy tomb arose
A mighty force, to crush thy deadly foes—
The feeble band, who once, like cowards, fled,
To distant lands, thy glorious gospel spread—
Despised—disown'd—midst persecution grew
The tree of life, and shed its healing dew.
Nursed by the blood of saints, thy church on earth,
In grandeur rose, and prov'd its heav'nly birth.
Thus—to supply her helpless, unfledg'd brood,
The Pelican bestows her life's warm blood;
To guard her offspring, plucks her bleeding breast,
And with its plumage lines her downy nest.

But who can search Jehovah's wise decrees?
Soon did the watchful pow'rs of darkness seize
The post of 'vantage, which they once forsook,
And the firm pillars of the fabric shook.
Then Antichrist, so long on earth foretold,
O'er the wide world, his daring thunders roll'd:
Insulted monarchs—abject states obey,
And, trembling, own the delegated sway.

Sceptres and thrones, on God's vicegerent wait,
And princes kneel in tributary state.
Immortal Truth! though high thy glories shine,
And undisguis'd, is wisdom's clear design,
Yet oft, on earth, where clouds of darkness roll,
And chains of error bind the captive soul,
In dungeons of despair, th' imprison'd thought
Hath found thy rescuing hand; yes—all unsought!
And thus, thy presence, through the depth of years,
Like a new sun, of light and warmth appears.

'Twas thus, when in a dark, benighted age,
Monastic fraud, had closed th' enlightning page,
Fram'd the stern law, with well concerted skill,
Whose vigour bent the subjugated will;
When prostrate reason sunk beneath its rod,
And mortal clay was deified as God:
Genuine Religion's vital strength was flown;
And heav'n was mock'd in impious wood and stone;
When priestly craft usurp'd religion's place,
With senseless rites, and Proteus-like grimace;

Conscience was hush'd; or, if she chanc'd to fear,
She pour'd her griefs in some confessor's ear;
Wild superstition spread th' imposing snare,
The midnight vigil—fast—and lengthen'd prayer;
Relics of things, long since consign'd to dust;
And chosen miracles, receiv'd on trust.

These were thy *follies*, Antichrist—thy sin,
Left a yet deeper taint of guilt within!
The sacred book, to vulgar eyes was seal'd;
An unknown tongue, the words of truth conceal'd;
Egyptian darkness wrapt a slumb'ring world;
And man o'er man, Jehovah's lightnings hurl'd.
Sins, that a Saviour died to blot, were sold;
And prelates throve on sacrilegious gold!
Christ's prophecy fulfill'd, his church became
A den of thieves—the Vatican its name—
Whilst unrepress'd, the sordid barter grew
Like a foul blot, or pestilential dew.
Dark age of ignorance! when learning crept
To cloister'd cells, and in seclusion slept,

Where pamper'd monks, in listless ease repos'd:
Or pac'd the round, their stricter vows impos'd.
Some choicer spirits, perhaps, there were, who breath'd
Th' inspiring air of freedom, but they sheath'd
Their half-drawn thoughts in silence, for that hour
Saw superstition's all-triumphant power.

Avenging God! who saw thine altars strew'd
With mystic fantasies, from thine abode
Thine arm was stretch'd; and at the signal blow,
A Champion stood, to guard thy Church below.
Thus, 'mid idolatry and darkness rear'd,
Moses, the messenger of God, appear'd;
Convey'd his gifts, or brav'd his anger's flood,
And in the breach, as mediator stood;
Thus Barak kindled at the minstrel song;
And Gideon's blast arous'd th' assembling throng;
Thus, for his suppliant country, Jephthah fought,
And Sampson's arm a wide deliverance wrought;
From Time's creation, to its awful close,
His promis'd grace, indulgent heav'n bestows,

For—true to inspiration's hallow'd page,
The church of Christ exists in every age;—
Built on a rock,—in vain shall man assail,
The gates of hell, itself, shall ne'er prevail!

In the deep stillness of the midnight prime,
When distant murmurs break the pealing chime,
When all had breath'd the customary pray'r,
And sound of straggling footsteps died in air,
With unquench'd spark of glowing wisdom fir'd,
One ardent spirit yet remains untir'd. (1)
Pleas'd in the silence of his cell, to pore
O'er each well studied page of classic lore;
Was it by *chance*, his careless fingers seiz'd
The Christian volume? True, it was, it pleas'd
His restless eye, to dwell on varying themes
Of crude theology, or fancy's dreams.

Whate'er it was—though chance can govern nought,
Something arose, which woke a slumb'ring thought;

As on he reads—successive doubts arise,
He finds the Church, a niggard nurse, supplies
Her children's wants with controversial strife,
And fails to give the wholesome Bread of Life.
Doctrines and precepts, not enforc'd before,
On his strong mind, in quick succession pour.
He sees Religion, stript of each disguise,
Stand forth, reveal'd, before his searching eyes:
"Ah! thus," he cries, "some ancient fathers thought;
"These are the truths the blest Augustine taught:
"From *hence* his scheme of saving faith he took;
"No monkish legends match this sacred book!
"By heav'n inspir'd, these unregarded rules,
"Are, singly, worth the wealth of all the schools!"
Thus spoke our great Reformer—and though dark
His clust'ring thoughts, they touch'd the latent spark,
Which, rous'd at length, his soul's ambitious aim,
And spread through Christendom the genial flame.

Thus, day by day, a flood of purer light
Rush'd on his newly renovated sight;

The treasur'd page, so lately found, was priz'd,
That book, which since, his careful hand revis'd;
How ill its deep sublimity agreed
With the low views of his adopted creed!
Where endless forms, and loud petitions try,
In length'ning chains, to reach the inmost sky;
Where costly gifts for splendid crimes atone,
And man, on earth, usurps Jehovah's throne.

How sick'ning now, to his revolting mind,
Appears the deep abasement of mankind;
How sunk each motive—whilst the will, debas'd
By servile bondage, hath alike effac'd
The god-like impress, which his Maker gave,
And fetter'd man, his fellow mortal's slave.

Such thoughts revolv'd, thro' many a watchful night,
Fed the pale glimmerings of approaching light;
And sleepless care oppress'd his teeming brain
With unsolv'd doubts, which rack'd his soul with pain.

Laid on the couch of sickness—Luther dwelt,
With calmer views, on what his bosom felt;
Prostrate, before the throne of grace, he bow'd,
And spoke the breathings of his soul aloud:—
" Heart-searching God! whose omnipresent eye
" Surveys all things, above—below the sky—
" Before whose sight each naked thought is seen,
" Without a shadowing veil to intervene:
" Disperse each cloud—no more thy counsels hide;
" Spirit of Truth! my soul in wisdom guide."
Brief was the pray'r; but, like the morning ray,
It chas'd the gath'ring mists of doubt away;
And He, who bade the sudden conflict cease,
Sent, to his side, a messenger of peace.
An aged monk, whom daily custom taught
The soothing arts of love, his presence sought:
Bent o'er his couch, with meek parental care,
And oft preferr'd the unpretending pray'r:
Whisper'd a dying Saviour's love, and spake
Of sins forgiv'n, alone, for Jesus' sake.

Much more he said—and Luther, breathless, hung,
On the mild accents of his glowing tongue:
" Think not, my Son," he cried, " though man abstain
" From grosser acts, his soul contracts no stain:
" This shelter'd spot, secured thy vernal years,
" Safe from the busy world's tumultuous fears:
" But in what cell, or desert, shall we find
" The needful curb, to chain the wand'ring mind?
" Yet, if repentant tears still flow afresh,
" Thy Saviour pleads for weak and erring flesh.
" Rise then, my Son, from this desponding gloom,
" A glorious mansion waits beyond the tomb.
" But see—th' immortal crown must first be won,
" Thy fight of faith is scarcely yet begun.
" Methinks the power, which bade the lightning shed
" Its fatal fury on thy partner's head, (2)
" Hath left some portion of celestial fire,
" That bids thy soul to brighter hopes aspire."
Thus spake the good old man—unconscious he,
How near his words approach'd to prophecy!

How, like the Bard, who view'd the sterile plain,
And hail'd the advent of Messiah's reign.
Before his eyes, a new-born world should spring—
How soon the barren wilderness should sing!

Revolving seasons, Luther's mind matur'd,
And deep, consuming cares, were long endur'd;
Ere, on a mission, from his order sent,
To distant Rome, his lonely steps were bent.
A pensive pilgrim, yet an honour'd guest,
When wearied nature crav'd indulgent rest.
Like some mild messenger of heav'n, ador'd,
The passing stranger oft his pray'rs implor'd:
Close to his lips, the flowing garment prest,
Receiv'd the gift, and cross'd th' inclining breast.

Thus on he journey'd, till the rising dome,
Betray'd the presence of imperial Rome:
The world's great Empress once—and still renown'd,
The fairest spot on learning's classic ground.

Nor could that western scourge, the Vandal race,
Her ancient pomp, or dignity efface.
'Tis true—the wanton hand of barb'rous pow'r
Had left its trace, in many a shatter'd tow'r:
And through the ruin'd temple's crumbling stone,
In partial gleams, the broken sunbeams shone;
Still rose the palace, and the spacious court,
The patriot senator's far-fam'd resort:
The stately column stands, whose point sublime,
In tow'ring height, o'erlooks the wreck of time.
Nobles and slaves, still cross the crowded paths,
In splendid groups, to seek the public baths:
Light zephyrs waft the purple robes aside,
And show th' embroider'd tunic's glittering pride.

At ev'ry op'ning of the extended streets,
Some spectacle, or pageant, Luther meets:
Patrons and priests, in gorgeous trappings, pass,
To celebrate, in state, the holy mass;
The pontiff pauses, with benignant grace,
And checks his milk-white palfrey's measur'd pace;

The rider, now, his prancing charger reins;
The charioteer his headlong course restrains;
All ranks, at once, the wonted call obey,
And bended crowds, their adoration pay.

Rear'd in the bosom of a convent's walls,
The impious homage, Luther's mind appals:
Silent he joins the throng, who now repair
To seek the consecrated house of pray'r.
The long procession ends its solemn march,
And the last foot hath pass'd the vaulted arch.

'Tis here, the sacred font arrests their sight,
And each performs the ceremonial rite.
The priest is station'd, and th' attendant throng,
In light and snowy vestments, sweep along:
Each youthful hand a golden censer bears,
And waving clouds dissolve, in fragrant airs;
Wide, o'er the fretted dome, the swelling peals
In thunders roll; the dying anthem steals

Th' enchanted soul, and cherub voices raise,
To heav'n's eternal King, the song of praise.
Alas! no grateful incense reach'd his throne,
The soul of harmony is there alone!
Th' obedient choir, in mutter'd accents, sing
Th' exalted strains of Israel's prophet king;
Elate with joy, the minstrel monarch burns,
And the arch'd roof the thrilling sound returns;
The floods of sorrow drown his drooping soul,
And mimic strains in heaving surges roll.

With varied gestures, see th' approaching priest,
And prompt assistants spread the mystic feast;
The host is rais'd—and, at the tinkling sound,
The countless multitudes have touch'd the ground.
Heart-rending sighs, suspend the chaunted strain,
Messiah bleeds for fallen man again;
The transform'd elements, have now assum'd
A Saviour's flesh, in thousand forms inhum'd—
Each faithful breast the sacred presence feels;
To Mary's Son th' impassion'd priest appeals:

His outstretch'd arms, the kneeling crowd embrace,
And softly falls the benediction's grace.

The rites are ended, with the sun's last beam,
And fading lights through many a casement stream:
The gothic windows shine, in rainbow hues;
And soften'd lamps a twilight gloom diffuse.
Dispersing groups the marble steps ascend,
And, to some sculptur'd saint, obsequious bend:
Ave Marias float on ev'ry breath;
The virgin's pray'rs release the soul in death,
Absolve the sinner from damnation's fate,
A passport sure, to heav'ns celestial gate.
" Blest saint! to whom the golden keys are given,
" O! intercede, and wake the queen of heav'n:
" For this, shall constant pray'rs and vows be thine,
" And frequent off'rings deck thy sacred shrine!"

By all unheeded, Luther's careful glance,
Hath mark'd the spot whence ling'ring steps advance:

From many a mourner, at confession near,
Repentant sighs have caught his list'ning ear;
But oh! what grief his upright bosom fills;
Through ev'ry pulse, what indignation thrills!
No healing balm, alas! is given, to close
The rankling wound which torturing guilt bestows.
Dismay'd, he hears the trembling sinner told,
All crimes are wash'd, and sanctifi'd by gold!
That benefactions smooth salvation's road,
Unclose the pond'rous gates of heaven's abode!
Redeem his kindred, and the sins erase
Of unborn ages, and a distant race! (3)

Abruptly turning from the shadowy aisle,
The simple novice spurns the priestly wile.
All-potent Rome, in closer contact view'd,
Is not like Rome beheld in solitude!
The hasty glance excites his wond'ring gaze,
Its noontide splendour, and its nightly blaze;
But, nearer seen, his calm reflections throw
A sadd'ning air o'er each imposing show!

The short-liv'd reign of pride and luxury o'er,
Their retributive ills, his thoughts deplore.
" Ill fated city!" thus the wanderer sigh'd,
" Here ruin stalks, with many a giant stride.
" The ruthless Goth hath left his track behind,
" But a worse despot rules thy fallen mind!
" Thine ancient deities are swept away,
" But superstition, still, asserts her sway!
" Her power, and thy degraded state the same,
" Though gross idolatry hath chang'd its name.
" Thy sons, no more, a freeman's fire retain,
" But wear the yoke, and hug th' enslaving chain.
" Shall 'grievous wolves' the flock of Christ devour,
" Nor Heav'n avenge the prostituted pow'r?
" By hands unseen each treach'rous link is wove,
" With devious steps thro' falsehood's maze they rove,
" Begirt with snares, engulph'd in error's night,
" Their works of darkness shun reproving light;
" No pastor probes the festering wound within,
" But slightly heals the unrepented sin;

" Thy sensual priests God's holy laws transgress,
" And trampled justice weeps, without redress!"

Thus Luther mus'd, as with averted eyes,
And down-cast looks, his destin'd course he plies:
Receives th' unbending Cardinal's farewell,
And seeks the silence of his peaceful cell.

END OF PART FIRST.

PART II.

ARGUMENT.

LUTHER returns to Wittemburgh, and is elected to a professor's chair—He prosecutes his studies very ardently, and gradually becomes more enlightened—The freedom of his remarks upon the papal abuses begins to arrest the general attention, and Luther appeals to Pope Leo X—He is anathematized, and his books are burnt—Luther retaliates, by burning the papal bull—A council of the States is convened—Luther is called upon, and answers to the summons—Upon his return, the Elector, Frederick the Wise, apprehensive of treachery, carries him off, and places him in a friendly imprisonment, at Wartburgh.

MARTIN LUTHER.

"It was upon him and his soul that the fate of Europe depended—
"He was the man of his age and nation."..... SCHLEGEL.

PART II.

HIS mission ended, Luther's hast'ning feet
Have sought fair Wittemburgh's secure retreat;
Where the wide Elbe's unruffled current flows,
The far famed seat of German science rose;
Well pleas'd, afar, the weary pilgrim sees
The slender spires o'ertop th' embowering trees;
There, late, the prince, to Luther's charge, consign'd
The watchful culture of th' expanding mind.
From Rome return'd, fresh honours grace his name,
The unsought recompense of well earn'd fame:

Alas, for Luther! flatt'ring titles brought
No clear solution to perplexing thought;
Some greatly marvel, others guess the cause
Why Martin shuns th' admiring world's applause,—
" His rigid virtue scorns the low reward
" Of worldly fame—by zealot saints abhorr'd;—
" See, with what care, his anxious looks explore,
" The classic page of many a foreign shore;
" But chief, that treasur'd tome, where saints of old
" The golden oracles of life unfold:
" Absorb'd in these, the new professor deems
" Our proud theology but fabled dreams;
" Some brooding cares his sleepless hours disturb:
" Some bursting thoughts his lips can scarcely curb.
" How oft his wit, in pungent satire, paints
" Our mystic doctors and seraphic saints!
" Traditions, too, from age to age transferr'd,
" He terms corruptions, impious and absurd.
" If this be true, and error guide the schools,
" Or lurk beneath their long established rules,

" His deep research, like Truth's enlightening ray,
" Foretells the dawn of some auspicious day."

Meantime th' awaken'd convert's studious care—
Unceasing abstinence and fervent pray'r
Unveil eternity's obscuring shade;
And Justice stands, in Mercy's robes array'd.
No more, he deems, the harden'd sinner wipes
His sins away, with self-inflicted stripes.
" Is guilt expell'd by pilgrimage, or fast?
" Guilt which requir'd a sacrifice so vast!
" Can mutter'd pray'rs from retribution save;
" Or sooth the inmates of the cheerless grave!
" This—but exalts the righteousness of man,
" And counteracts the gospel's saving plan.
" For ah! should man his worthiest deeds rehearse,
" The law condemns him, and becomes his curse.
" Shall he, whilst doubts and guilty thoughts intrude,
" Dare to assert unblemish'd rectitude!

" Nor like the humbled mourner, cloth'd in dust,
" Yield his rebellious heart's fallacious trust?
" Christ is the vine, from whence the living shoots
" Derive their verdure and luxuriant fruits:
" No Heathen morals, though sublimely penn'd,
" Can e'er with Christian ethics safely blend:
" Through wilder'd paths, let purblind casuists grope,
" Christ is, alone, the sinner's strength and hope."

In meditation thus, and ceaseless toil,
Did Luther's hours consume the midnight oil:
No wonder, then, that truths, so well impress'd,
Fix'd their firm basis in his thoughtful breast;
Flow'd on his tongue, and made his lips dispense
Th' unborrow'd charm of native eloquence.
Releas'd from servile fears, the world at large
Shar'd his reflections with his pastoral charge.
—Oh! what a gloom religion's aspect bears,
The seeds of grace are chok'd with noxious tares:
The bold Dominican—yet uncontroll'd,
In shameless traffic barters souls for gold!

" What impious doctrine," Luther boldly cried,
" In vain hath God, th' incarnate Saviour, died—
" If gold can ransom and absolve from pain,
" Martyrs have bled, and saints rejoic'd in vain.
" Here will I stand—beneath this bleeding cross,
" And count my life but vile and worthless dross:
" Erect the sign before expiring eyes,
" Nor cease my labours, till the day-spring rise!"

Intrepid warrior! join that fearless band,
Dispers'd through many an unfrequented land!
That hunted tribe, whose faith unshaken stood,
Though tried by tortures, and chastis'd with blood!
Those who ne'er join'd the idol's glitt'ring train;
The simple followers of the Lamb once slain!(1)

But see! the strife has reach'd the distant court,
And angry disputants in shoals resort;
Bear witness Leipsic! for thy lofty tow'rs
Rung with the conflict of contending pow'rs!

Forc'd to the strife, against his passive will,
With temper'd fervour, and elaborate skill,
Did Luther plead. His quell'd opponents found
Their sinking cause expos'd on slipp'ry ground;
Their futile arguments fresh hopes arouse,
And virtuous minds the grateful cause espouse.
Some cares, 'tis true, oppress'd his feeling heart,
For venom'd tongues inflict the galling smart,
Insidious foes, that for a while retire,
Renew the contest with redoubled ire;
Wearied with slanders and polemic fights,
To good Staupitius thus, at length he writes:
" My lov'd superior, and my honour'd friend,
" To thee the first fruits of my hand I send.
" When horrid fears assail'd my youthful breast,
" Thy prescient counsel brought consoling rest:
" Bade me believe the fierce temptations given,
" As tests of virtue, by approving heaven.
" Then let the gracious pontiff's searching glance,
" Survey the doctrines which I here advance,

" His keen discernment must approve my zeal;
" For Leo, surely, seeks the public weal.
" In want, and sickness, though my days be spent,
" To righteous Heaven I leave the dark event!
" Should HE decree my death, with patient smile
" Serene, I'll mount the martyr's blazing pile.

Ah, simple Luther! spend thy fruitless breath,
And talk of bonds, imprisonment, and death!
In courtly strains approach the papal throne—
Its lofty claims, with due obedience, own—
Entreat the pontiff, in thy zeal, to flee
The vile corruptions of the Romish see;
Plead but for truth—that truth which Jesus taught,
For right of conscience, and unshackled thought.
The proud voluptuous Leo heeds thee not,
Or laughs, in secret, at th' imagined plot!
The careless Pontiff's ear, thou ne'er shalt win,
He forg'd the bribe—absolves the purchas'd sin:
Thy meek concessions, and thy prostrate state,
Can ne'er the vengeance of thy foes abate.

With Heav'n itself, their furious arms engage,
Judicial blindness prompts their wilful rage!
Brace on thine armour, and uphold thy shield,
Thine eyes behold the "*Man of Sin*" reveal'd!

Through neighb'ring states the new opinions flew,
And Luther's partisans in number grew;
Condemn'd, unheard, he hesitates no more,
But probes the ulcer, to its inmost core.
The Roman Hierarchy stands forth expos'd;
To heav'ns decree, and human rights oppos'd—
Rapacious Pontiffs scorn the public good,
Grasp at the world, and deluge states with blood.
Vicars of Christ below—unjustly nam'd—
The King of Kings no earthly empire claim'd!
Licentious priests the sacred courts defile,
Disgrace their call, and serious truths revile.
No faithful pastors stem the tide of vice,
Instruct the young, or yield the sage advice.
Is man infallible? ah vain pretence!
Let Leo pause—and purge this foul offence.

But see—the storm hath burst on Luther's head;
From mighty Rome the papal mandate sped;
Whose fulminated thunders, heard of old,
Dethron'd the mighty, and depress'd the bold.
Stript of their power, the smother'd peals resound,
Like hollow murmurs from volcanic ground.
The charm is o'er—the with'ring spell is broke—
Impatient spirits burst the galling yoke—
The reign of sloth and ignorance is past,
The tree of knowledge hath been pluck'd at last!

With bitter scorn, and indignation full,
The bold reformer seiz'd the penal bull:
" On ev'ry side," he cries, " by all attack'd;
" They urge no reasons, but they cry ' Retract':
" Retract the truth? ah no! so help me God!
" His frown I dread, but not th' usurper's rod—
" No means are used to terminate debates,
" They call no council of the assembled states.
" The die is cast—I spurn the pontiff's hate—
" He burns my books, his bull shall share their fate.'

Determin'd thus—the gath'ring concourse came,
To raise the pile, and spread the kindling flame.
" Ah thus" they cry " may sacred fires consume
" The ties that bind us to imperious Rome !"
The daring act hath reach'd the pontiff's ear,
What anxious cares on every face appear !
To Luther's cause the papal curse extends,
And hope deserts, and terror chills his friends.
The church is powerful,—and its vengeance flows,
On all who tamper with apostate foes.
Unhappy priest ! what pow'r shall intervene ?
No friend can serve thee, and no patron screen;
Thy luckless hand, may rue that deed so rash—
All-potent Rome still writhes beneath thy lash !

Rous'd by a summons, from th' imperial seat,
In solemn state the gath'ring members meet.
A mix'd assemblage, see ! the glitt'ring throng,
Princes and Cardinals, advance along;
O'er the wide hall the splendid circles reach,
The diet opens with the Nuncio's speech.

" Illustrious pow'rs! the late disputes have spread,
" Factions are rais'd, and discontents are bred.
" This arch-apostate Rome, itself, defies—
" Blasphemes the Church, and circulates his lies!
" The ancient heresies, again revive; (1)
" Nay more, the pestilential doctrines thrive—
" The harden'd heretic lies under ban."
—'Twas thus the sweeping accusation ran.

The grievance this!—" but who can trace its source?
" Is truth establish'd, then, by brutal force?
" A doubtful question, and invidious too,
" Let Luther come, and prove your censures true,
" Ye learned doctors, skilful and acute,
" Confront the sophist, and his words refute."
So urg'd the sovereign, and th' opposing sound,
Of clam'rous arbiters was hush'd around.

The crisis hastens—but th' Elector's care,
Prevents the crafty, and insidious snare.

The guarded passport frees from lurking harm; (2)
And timid friends dismiss the fond alarm:
But who shall dare the dang'rous scheme propose,
Will Luther venture 'midst a host of foes?
Did solemn pledge avert their deadly rage,
When kings betray'd the poor Bohemian sage!

"What needless fears!" the brave reformer cries,
"I trust in God, and treacherous man despise:
"The emp'ror calls—his faithful subject stands,
"In prompt obedience, to his just commands.
"Let royal Charles fulfil his plighted trust,
"Nor stain his sceptre with an act unjust;
"Then man may rage, and demons aid the strife, (3)
"I'll yield no truth, to spare my worthless life."

His purpose fix'd, to Worms the Hero speeds,
The pressing crowd his onward course impedes—
"What wonder this," resounds from every tongue,
"Is this the Heretic condemn'd so long?

" See, on his levees, potent princes wait,
" This vile Augustine monk is lodged in state!
" What numbers flock to see our country's pride,
" 'Tis Freedom's cause, and God protects his side!
" No shrinking fears, in secret fetters, bind
" The steadfast purpose of his dauntless mind,
" To sacred Truth, alone, he bows the knee,
" This man's resolve would set whole nations free!"

Now marshall'd forth in form, see Luther hies,
And bears the gaze of thousand piercing eyes;
Some friends were there, but tim'rous, cautious friends,
'Tis Heaven, alone, the sacred cause defends:
Celestial wisdom swells his ardent speech,
And uncorrupted truth his accents teach.

" August assembly!" Luther cries, " attend!
" To lawful claims, and just demands I bend:
" Though vaunting foes my injur'd fame assail,
" Judge ye my cause, and hold th' impartial scale.

" Unus'd to courts, unskill'd in labour'd phrase,
" No polish'd charm my naked speech displays;
" Your patient hearing, then, indulgent grant,
" I venture here to reason—not recant.
" The papal system I denounc'd, 'tis true,
" But thousands else, its vile abuses knew:
" All thinking minds its dreadful state deplore,
" I said no more than others thought before.
" If in discussion, with reviling men,
" Intemp'rate words escap'd my thoughtless pen:
" Frail man may scarce some angry thoughts restrain,
" Condemn my faults—but let the truth remain.
" My foes affirm that secret treason lurks,
" Conceal'd, beneath my least obnoxious works;
" Ah, much I fear, th' unerring words of life,
" Are all the treason which provokes the strife!
" Then pause, ye princes, weigh this cause aright,
" Lest not with me, but God, himself, ye fight."
He ceas'd 'mid murmurs of suppress'd applause,
Submissive bows, and silently withdraws.

Nor all in vain he speaks—The princely train
Glow at the pleader's animated strain;
He goes—but still those murm'ring sounds convey
The unbought suffrage of the heart away.

Foil'd in their bold attack on Luther's will,
His baffled foes pursue the contest still.
Their plastic pow'rs each subtle art exert,
He brav'd the worst, and will not now desert;
By man's decision, he can ne'er abide,
God must be umpire, and his word their guide;
If that be granted—truth rewards his pains,
If not—one sad alternative remains.

With fond solicitude, and deep concern,
His friends await their advocate's return:
Silence and distance magnify their fears,
Pour'd forth in sighs, and unavailing tears.
Dread hour of keen suspense! how much they chide
Their easy faith, which e'er in words relied!

" What makes him linger? has the fatal snare
" Deceiv'd a heart encompass'd thus with prayer?
" We dread disasters, from some cause unknown,
" Or sure his trusty steps on wings had flown."
But where is Luther? must we mourn his fate,
The hapless victim of a treach'rous bait?
No, brave Reformer! o'er thy guarded head
The flames of persecution ne'er shall spread.
Though princes rage, and leagu'd confed'rates frown,
Thy rugged brow shall press no martyr's crown.
The bright'ning halo of unclouded light,
Whose glory gilds the beatific sight,
Shall ne'er be thine, till through th'eternal ray,
Mortality's dim shades have pass'd away!

Weep not for Luther, nor bewail his flight,
Shall not the Judge of heav'n and earth do right?
His pow'r sustains, whate'er his will began:
That will inspir'd th' elector's secret plan.
Well did the artful stratagem evince,
The watchful caution of his patron prince!

In ambush plac'd, by Frederic's wise command,
Forth from the covert rush the trusty band,
Ply the mock warfare, seize their wrested prey,
And bear their spoil to Wartburgh's towr's away.

Where the dark forest, and the tangled wood,
In unmolested pride, for ages stood:
Seen through the shadows of approaching night,
The ancient structure crowns the mountain's height.
There, ev'ry want the menial train afford,
And plenty spreads the hospitable board;
Of friends—of books—of social joys bereft,
How changed the scene, from all that Luther left!
Here undisturb'd, his pacing footsteps fall,
And echoes answer from the vaulted hall.
The massive walls, and gloomy lights impart,
A sense of loneliness, that chills his heart.

But mental discipline, at length, dispers'd
The discontented thoughts, which rose at first.

His grateful heart, to happier subjects led,
Pour'd its rich benisons on Frederic's head.
" Heaven bless thee, Prince! the wisest and the best,
" Friend of the friendless, guardian of th' opprest:
" May faithful hearts, thy righteous throne surround,
" And years of bright prosperity abound!
" Till, like the mellow'd fruit of ripen'd age,
" Thy life hath reach'd its long protracted stage,
" Then, borne aloft, may angel wings convey
" Thy unchain'd spirit, from its bonds of clay!"

It chanc'd one night, at twilight's dusky hour,
When glimm'ring stars just lit his lonely tower—
When o'er the startled eye of fancy gleam
Distorted shadows, with uncertain beam—
There wander'd Luther, wrapt, for hours, in thought;
His heighten'd feelings to intenseness wrought—
Time flies unheeded, till, at night's pale noon,
In silent majesty, sails forth the moon.

As Luther casts a quick pervading glance,
What grandeur frowns o'er yonder vast expanse!
Beneath, the forest spreads its thick'ning maze,
Its varied foliage, ting'd with silv'ry rays;
No sound is heard, no faint departing tread,
The lab'ring hind hath reach'd his rustic shed;
So mild the air, not e'en the passing breeze
Sighs through the wood, and stirs the rustling trees;
The insect tribe, have ceas'd their murm'ring strain,
The wheeling bat, alone, flits o'er the plain.
Lost in the shade, the distant valley lies;
No steepled convent's tap'ring spires arise;
Its dull unvaried peal is heard no more,
The busy hum of stirring life is o'er!!

O'er the wide firmament's serene abode,
The brilliant lamps of heav'n are thickly strew'd;
The dazzling lustre of each shining sphere,
Makes ev'ry star a magic world appear.
"Thou dark and desert mountain!" Luther cries,
"Here man might hold communion with the skies;

" Here might his soul, entranc'd in heav'nly dreams,
" Contemplate God, and trace immortal themes,
" Till purg'd from every sin—each conflict o'er—
" His raptur'd soul, to worlds unseen should soar:
" Where truth, no more, in partial shade conceal'd,
" Shines forth in pure, unfading light reveal'd!
" In such a spot—in solitude as drear,
" The lov'd disciple dwelt—that favour'd seer:
" What mortal hand, in glowing tints can paint,
" The splendid visions of th' illustrious saint!
" Upheld on seraph wings, his eagle gaze,
" Beheld Divinity's unshrouded blaze!
" Futurity's dark veil, in thunders rent,
" Before his presence, pass'd each dread event—
" Those fleeting scenes, in awful symbols tell,
" The fate of nations, and the strife of hell!
" The trumpet sounds—the mystic seals are broke—
" By angel-lips prophetic words are spoke—
" O'er earth and sea, the mingled thunders roar,
" An oath decrees—' that time shall be no more!'

" What piercing cries, what bitter groans are heav'd,
" From sinful breasts, of every hope bereav'd!
" Hide us, ye rocks—ye caves—ye mountains vast,
" Till heaven's avenging storm be safely past!
" In vain they cry, the fleeting earth retreats—
" The sinking stars forsake their lofty seats—
" The darken'd sun his cheering light withdraws,
" And nature yields to heav'n's mysterious laws!

" Now springs a city, of immortal birth,
" The new Jerusalem descends on earth!
" What are those forms, whose airy footsteps trace,
" The golden streets of yon celestial place?
" Whence did that blissful, and victorious train,
" Their shining crowns, and spotless garments gain?
" Primeval Ministers of Heav'n! proclaim,
" To mortal ears, their unrecorded name.
" These are the saints, who once on earth oppress,
" Have reach'd the mansions of abiding rest.
" Wash'd in redeeming blood, no earthly stain,
" Or sinful taint, these ransom'd souls retain.

" For them the bread of life profusely grows,
" To quench their thirst the living fountain flows.
" No sun they need—the Lamb of God supplies,
" Refulgent beams, and wipes their tearful eyes."

Hark—how the whisper'd airs of heav'n inspire
The minstrel's song, and wake his slumb'ring lyre!
As, round the eternal throne, the saints rejoice,
The kneeling exile joins his swelling voice!
To heaven's abode, the grateful hymn ascends,
A mortal strain with seraph incense blends!
How little, Luther, could thy thoughts divine,
That thousand tongues should chaunt that lay of thine!
Its matchless numbers, and undying fame,
To distant lands, immortalize thy name;
But ah! thy deathless works of faith engrave,
More lasting records o'er thy mould'ring grave!

END OF PART SECOND

PART III.

ARGUMENT.

LUTHER remains at Wartburgh and endeavours to console his friends—Fresh difficulties, however, arise, and he enters once more with vigour into the contest—Finding his followers almost in despair, at a succession of adverse circumstances, he visits them secretly—and proposes to them his great work of translating the scriptures into German—He returns and prosecutes the work with uncommon diligence—King Henry the eighth enters the lists against him—Luther returns to Wittemburgh—Violent persecutions follow—but the translation is at length completed—Zuinglius—Rustic war—The Reformation sustains a heavy loss in the death of the Elector Frederic—Luther's marriage—The equivocal conduct of Erasmus—Conclusion.

MARTIN LUTHER.

" It was upon him and his soul that the fate of Europe depended—
" He was the man of his age and nation."..... SCHLEGEL.

PART III.

FIX'D in his Patmos, and once more at peace,
The active duties of the Exile cease,
But not his past'ral cares; his flock demand
Parental guidance from his willing hand;
For what is duty? are its laws defin'd,
Its object stated, or its sphere confin'd?
" Weep not, my brethren, at this mournful pause—
" For God himself, conducts the righteous cause;
" His work may prosper here, this shaded bower
" May help to nurture Truth's incipient flower:

" Deep in the soil its branching roots may spread,
" By genial airs and heav'nly moisture fed:
" And though unseen, when brighter suns arise,
" This feeble plant may shortly reach the skies."

'Twas thus their Pastor sooth'd each grief—and were
But dear Melancthon at his side, to share
The pleasing labours of his sacred task,
No other blessing would the exile ask;
But see, the wordy war reviv'd again!
The huge Leviathan is not yet slain.
Ye sage divines! puff'd up with fond conceit,
To gaping crowds, each sland'rous charge repeat!
There's one, within those castellated towers,
Whose mind, impregnable, resists your powers.
Though Luther quit, awhile, th' embattled field,
His firm, unconquer'd spirit, ne'er shall yield!

" I take the gauntlet," Luther cries, " ye fling,
" What are the accusations, now, ye bring?

" My meek concessions to the Pope?—Ah me!
" I mourn the fruitless effort more than ye.
" God is my judge, how well my words exprest,
" The genuine feelings of a guileless breast!
" Our holy church no son more faithful held,
" Till by repulse and harsh decrees compell'd
" To fight for truths, your stubborn will denied;
" My fainting pow'rs on God, alone, relied.
" To Rome—from youth—by tend'rest ties endear'd,
" So much alas! schismatic ills I fear'd,
" Were ought but truth requir'd, to end the strife,
" How freely Luther had resign'd his life!
" Bear witness, heaven! with how much filial awe, (1)
" I bent my will to each imperious law.
" Ye silent nights! that saw my prostrate frame,
" Thou glimm'ring lamp! and unextinguish'd flame!
" Ye sacred altars! hear my loud appeal,
" Attest my fervent, but misguided zeal!
" I own, with shame, the warmth your pen describes;
" But what are sneers, or taunts, or biting gibes,

" Or bold attacks,—of which the church complains?
" I shed no life blood, and I forge no chains.
" Your very fears betray the smarting stroke—
" Thus Felix trembled, when th' apostle spoke.
" I preach sedition? so did Jesus, too,
" When through the infuriate throng, the slander flew.
" Not Paul, himself, from cens'ring tongues is free,
" Who taught obedience to 'the powers that be'—
" I blame monastic vows?—a just complaint,—
" Did God impose th' unnatural, harsh restraint?
" My judgment, vaunting Rome, may well impeach,
" For not *her* rules, but *God's* commands I teach;
" Can man—presuming man—for justice plead,
" Or ask his God to bless one spotless deed?
" *All*—all have sinn'd—there's none can claim the right
" To save a soul, or brave his Maker's sight!

One skirmish o'er, the wearied exile cries,
" Oh that my thoughts had wings to cleave the skies!
" Where some bright eagle builds her lofty nest—
" How would my flagging spirits welcome rest!"

Unhappy Luther! thou may'st well recoil
From endless strife, and unremitting toil:
But 'tis thy portion, in this world of woe—
They who would reap in bliss, in tears must sow.
For oh! what tidings from his friends at home!
The youthful Charles, seduc'd by flatt'ring Rome,
Abets her schemes, and aids her dark designs,
Nay—more unjust—the malediction signs!
But, worse than public brawls with foreign foes,
Internal wars disturb his friends' repose.
" No mild restraint fanatic zeal can check,
" Our altars mourn o'er many a scatter'd wreck!
" The desolation which extends around,
" Unthinking minds, with Luther's cause confound:
" The gen'rous prince, besieg'd on ev'ry side,
" Can scarce protect us, much less be our guide;
" Our schools deserted, and our youth misled,
" Why is our father and instructor fled?"

Oh fatal news! with many a struggling sigh,
The absent friend indites the prompt reply—

" Thou faithful friend! whose love, unalter'd, glows,
" The sweetest boon which heav'n on man bestows!
" Belov'd Melanethon! well I know thy soul
" Would fain the bursting force of grief controul.
" No nobler spirit breathes beneath the skies!
" I know—conceal'd from unobservant eyes—
" That breast contains a hidden mine of thought,
" With precious gems, and sparkling treasures fraught.
" But ah! thy gentler voice can ne'er prevail,
" When spiteful foes at ev'ry turn assail,
" Tell me no more, that cruel edict fell
" On sinking hearts, like superstition's spell!
" That friends lament—that wild enthusiasts rave—
" O say not Luther's voice alone can save!
" Enough of anguish loads my burden'd mind,
" Within this isolated spot confin'd;
" I throw the sacred page aside, unread,
" These walls return my quick, impatient tread,
" With careless habit and abstracted mien,
" A joyless partner of each rural scene;

" Abroad—when recreation lures my feet,
" Some painful emblem in the chase I meet; (*)
" Thus like the captive bird, in prison'd wiles,
" No change of scene, my drooping soul beguiles,
" A secret fire consumes my throbbing veins,
" It chafes my soul, corrodes my galling chains,
" I come—I fly the interdicted space,
" I fold thee, Philip, in my fond embrace!"

How sweet to quit the controversial pen,
And linger near the busy haunts of men!
How sweet, to friendship's quicken'd glance, appears
The eye bedew'd with sympathetic tears!
Looks that reflect the feeling heart, so well!
Responsive thoughts, no ardent speech can tell!
But ah! more blest, to mingle sighs with those,
Who share our joys, or mitigate our woes!
Who nerve the will—support the weak resolve—
And strengthen bonds, that never can dissolve!

Such were thy feelings, Luther, warmly pour'd,
To smiling friends, around the festive board:
The wand'rer, now, recounts his growing cares,
Invites their counsel, and implores their pray'rs:
All, now, in turn, applaud the scheme, and long
To hail the Scriptures in their native tongue!

But who shall execute the wise design,
Translate the page, or smooth the rugged line?
'Tis he, who first the grateful subject plann'd—
His country claims it, from his pow'rful hand.
Let Germans see their vig'rous tongue convey
Those healing streams, that glad the visual ray;
But friends must part—the plighted word be kept—
" Though written vows our foes may intercept,
" Their utmost force can ne'er our souls divide,
" Farewell, dear colleagues!" Luther softly sigh'd.

Now to his solitude return'd at length,
With freshen'd spirits, and recruited strength:

The arduous labour of his pen renew'd,
The lonely priest, his silent course pursu'd;
The classic stores of Greek and Hebrew lie,
With oriental gems before his eye:
These all their treasur'd gifts, in order, bring,
And time escapes on hope's enchanting wing.

Wake, Luther, wake! unloose the bonds of sleep!
Thine eyes may well, eternal vigils keep!
Lo, Albion's Monarch, with inflated pride,
Stalks through the ranks, and joins the adverse side!
No worthless champion, thou, when kings unite
Their sapient pow'rs in controversial fight!
Fear not, my muse, for England's fate; nor grieve,
Though Leo's hands the flatt'ring boon receive;
Zeal for the church, enkindles no concern,
The tyrant's homage seeks a rich return;
What—though from Rome the titled gift descend,
Yet Brunswick's race, a purer faith defend.

Inconstant Prince! no more enrag'd complain,
Of Luther's insolent and fierce disdain!
Thou can'st not stop the course of freedom's race,
Thy tyrant rage accelerates its pace.
To Leo crouch—no deed annuls thy vows!—
For mighty Charles protects thy slighted spouse.

The boon denied, for which he stoop'd so low,
What swelling streams of coarse invective flow!
The furious Monarch, breaks his feudal chains,
And devastation spreads o'er Britain's plains.
The silent cloisters, where, in cheerless cells,
The hapless victim of seclusion dwells,
Rung with the tread of flashing hoofs, around,
And distant groves, with piercing shrieks resound.
Thy plains, O Sherwood! heard the mournful cries,
As through thy woods the houseless wand'rer flies:
There—on that spot where lawless plunderers tore
The treasur'd spoils of many a sacred store—
Immortal bays, and cypress branches wave,
And pensive genius weeps o'er Byron's grave! (3)

There, living worth rebuilds the Gothic pile.
And ancient forms, in new creations smile!

Recall'd to Wittemburgh, by sorrowing friends,
The short imprisonment of Luther ends.
The timid Prince, his anxious eye foresaw,
Could yield no counsel, and impose no law.
The shade withdrawn, the blind restor'd to sight,
They reel and stagger, at meridian light.
Shall artful foes, the distant fortress seize, (4)
And Luther slumber in inglorious ease?
" Ah no, my friends! though fiery darts should fall,
" I come at duty's loud imperious call!
" Heed not presumptuous men, whate'er their creed,
" If for divine authority they plead.
" Award no sentence, till your judgment cools,
" But prove each spirit first, by scripture rules.
" What is their high commission more than ours?
" Where are their proofs of supernat'ral pow'rs?
" The written word, such vaunting claim excludes,
" And Satan, oft, in hallow'd ground intrudes.

" Do they commune with God? no credence give—
" Who can behold Jehovah's face, and live?
" Impervious clouds, his dark pavillion spread,
" And trembling seraphs, veil the drooping head!
" Mark well these boasters, and observe their aim;
" Do they exalt their own, or Jesus' name?
" If raptur'd visions, bless their nightly dreams,
" If fair and smooth their bright experience seems,
" Mistrust their faith, they want the wholesome grief,
" The cross of Christ—that touchstone of belief!
" Have they no conflicts, no desponding fear?
" Ah! then the 'man of sorrows' dwells not there!

" My noble Prince? 'tis not contempt, or fear
" Of mild authority, that brings me here.
" But O my scatter'd flock! expos'd at large,
" Who shall acquit me of the invidious charge?
" Pastors should teach the young, and guide the weak,
" And make their lives in bright example speak.
" The time will come, my bleeding thoughts foresee,
" When human powers must yield to God's decree!

" Then, o'er the earth, shall sound the dire alarm—
" God shall arise, and bare his vengeful arm!
" In that dread hour of wrath, may Frederic stand,
" His vessel anchor'd on some peaceful strand!
" But though prophetic warnings God bestows,
" He asks no vengeance, on his wilful foes:
" Ours be the passive will—the patient course—
" Where long endurance is oppos'd to force.
" This be our glory—this our high renown,
" To seek no earthly, but immortal crown!"

Each at his post—with quick, redoubled care,—
The sacred version, eager hands prepare. (5)
Their varied talents, and research combin'd,
Each hath his own peculiar task assign'd.
The work complete—what thrilling raptures swell
Their glowing hearts—let true devotion tell!—
" Now let the pow'rs of hell, and darkness quake,
" This is the rod, whose iron force shall break
" Each secret hold, where Satan's pow'rs exist!
" This solar beam, shall clear the densest mist,

" Blest art! by thee the living mind pourtray'd,
" Shines forth, in many a lasting page display'd!
" Germ of that tree, whose fruitful blossoms yield,
" Their rip'ning fruits, o'er many a desert field!
" The noblest theme, employs thine embryo skill,
" Unfold thy pow'rs, and propagate HIS will!"

Each circling year, th' assembled group beheld
In holy bond, and sacred compact held:
Each social pow'r its chasten'd gift bestows,
And, o'er the scene, a brighter radiance throws.
Truth's piercing rays the dark horizon gild;
The word of prophecy, in part, fulfill'd—
Kings of the earth, and queens, and men of might,
Stretch'd forth their fost'ring hands, and hail'd the rising light!

But threat'ning clouds o'erspread the gloomy skies,
And bitter storms of persecution rise!
" Ye ruthless pow'rs! consume the tortur'd frame—
" Souls shall escape, and truth remain the same!

" Firm in their faith, no scorching flames dismay—
" The night of anguish leads to endless day!
" They pierce the veil—they reach the heav'nly goal—
" Let the slow dirge in minstrel numbers roll.

" Martyr'd saints, in Christ rejoice!
" Lift to heav'n the dying voice!
" See! victorious palms are growing,
" Sparkling streams of bliss are flowing;
" See! the studded pavement gleams,
" With sapphire rays, and ruby beams;
" Golden harps exalt the strain,
" Worthy is the Lamb that's slain!
" The fight is o'er—the race is run—
" The amaranthine crown is won!"

Thou generous foe, who shunn'd the vengeful strife,
And gave the assassin back his worthless life;
Thou, who ne'er trampled on a vanquish'd foe,
But with thy pen, alone, repuls'd each blow:

Thou, who at heav'n's command, had freely bled,
Where was thy Christian love and candour fled,
When from his hills of native freedom came
The Swiss Reformer of celebrious fame? (6)

Alas! that men should e'er perversely strive,
And keep the flame of discord's torch alive;
When error's veil obscures the partial sight,
'Tis ever thus that men for shadows fight!
Well might the waves of dark temptation roll,
And floods of anguish, drench thy troubled soul!
Well might the tempter, whose incessant care
Knows the best time to lay the deadly snare,
Gird thee with toils, no mortal hand could free,
Th' enslaver dreads no earthly foe like thee!
Mourn o'er thy sins—before thy Maker bow—
The best have sinn'd, and mourn'd, as well as thou!
What do they prove—those faults which all deplore?
Thou wert not quite perfection?—ah much more!

—They prove how strong, that vigorous mind, which broke
All but *one* link of Rome's despotic yoke!

But see! like locusts o'er the darken'd skies,
Th' insurgent armies in commotion rise:
True to thy Prince and Country's lawful claim,
Luther appear, and quench the spreading flame!
Thy voice may, perhaps, this frantic rage disarm,
Then rouse thy powers, and sound the loud alarm:
" Unthinking mortals! stay your rash career!
" Seek ye your rights—the price is far too dear!
" When on your peaceful hearths the embers die—
" When, in despair, your helpless children fly—
" When, o'er yon plains, the crimson torrents flow—
" And darts are hurl'd, from each contending foe—
" Then may ye weep—the barter'd ills are worse;
" Your wild infatuation brings its curse!
" Is it religious zeal, that fires your breast?
" —Then loyal virtues, are its surest test;

" The sons of faction, Christ, on earth, disown'd!
" He seiz'd no empire—and no king dethron'd—
" What did the noble Paul of Tarsus say?—
" He own'd and liv'd beneath a tyrant's sway;
" What is your conquest? where your wealthy spoil?
" What are the fruits of all this senseless toil?
" Convents are burnt, and images o'erthrown—
" Wage ye the war with lifeless wood and stone?
" If men's opinions still be left behind,
" Ye sow the whirlwind, and ye reap the wind!
" Let both remain—when truth's inspiring ray
" Hath touch'd the soul, they dwindle to decay!
" And you—ye Princes! hear my warning breath,
" See how your victims strew the field of death!
" Sons of sedition—true—but O, what then!
" Have ye no feelings for misguided men?
" Your vast extortions, drain their sinking store,
" What could the hand of tyrant rage do more!
" Their piercing cries have reach'd the inmost sky,
" Your altars smoke, your towns in ashes lie!

" But is it Luther's crime?—rash men forbear!
" Lest truth and justice in your sentence share;
" Sheath every sword—the oppressor and th' opprest,
" Fulfil your part, to God resign the rest!"

But hark! what mournful sounds are those, afar!
'Tis not the tumult of approaching war,
But cries of heartfelt woe—the deep lament,
Where souls unite to mourn some dire event!
What speechless anguish sits on ev'ry brow;
Unhappy Germans! weep your guardian now!
Low in the dust, the noble Frederic lies!
The Prince—the Father and Protector dies!
Weep gentle peace, o'er this, thy favourite son!
See, from thy bowers, the fruitful olive won!
No blood-stain'd laurels twine around his bier,
Dew'd with the widow's sigh, or orphan's tear!
A gallant soldier, in the warlike field,
To no opposing force his arm would yield.
But ah! how soon he bade the conflict cease,
How soon that victor sword was sheath'd in peace!

Whilst proud, ambitious Kings, from shore to shore,
Spread their wide arms, and wade thro' human gore,
This peaceful Prince, his subjects' welfare sought,
And deem'd the conqueror's spoils too dearly bought!

Patron of Science! o'er thy sacred shrine
The weeping muse her choicest bays shall twine!
Devotion, too, which hail'd thy living worth,
Pours forth her tribute, o'er thy mould'ring earth!
Thou, who in darkness rear'd, ne'er shunn'd the light,
But faithful watch'd, till Heav'n illum'd thy sight:
Nor watch'd in vain—for see, thy latest deed
Left not a vestige of thy former creed:
No loud acknowledgment of Rome's controul;
No gold, for masses, o'er thy prison'd soul;
No Saint invok'd—with pertinacious call;
Christ is thy rock—thy trust—thy all in all.
Albis! through all thy streams the tidings tell,
Prince—Patron—Friend, a long, a last farewell!

As thus the mournful train bewail'd their Chief,
Their mingled tears assuag'd oppressive grief—
For ah! how much supporting strength they need,
Whose falt'ring footsteps care and grief impede!

Why, then, amidst such dread, conflicting fears,
Such awful signs, and universal tears;
When public care no selfish thought allows,
Does Luther haste to pledge connubial vows?
'Tis not the deed we reprobate—but then,
This sudden act will please vindictive men:
Vociferous tongues will blast his honour'd name,
And truth alas! may sink, with Luther's fame:
" Cease, fearful friends," th' undaunted Bridegroom cries,
" Nor rend my heart, by ev'ry dread surmise.
" Well do I know they hold me now accurst—
" From thousand lips reproachful censures burst.

' O! be the sacrilegious wretch abhor'd!
' He dares to wed a virgin of the Lord!

' His order's sacred vestments thrown aside,
' He breaks the Canons, and consoles a Bride,'
" What—shall the Priests of Rome's voluptuous court
" Hold me in scorn, and spread the vile report!
" Whilst nameless deeds disgrace a Christian land,
" Shall licens'd sins expunge a high command!
" My vows are sanction'd by the laws of heav'n;
" To man a helpmate and a friend was giv'n—
" No rigid clause, the precious gift restrain'd;
" If for one man—why not for all ordain'd?
" No meteor flame allur'd my dazzled sight,
" Mine was no wild enthusiastic flight—
" To noble birth, and spotless worth allied,
" My consort's merits, long experience tried.

" Avaunt, ye hypocrites! whose spurious zeal
" Should introvert, and make a home appeal.
" Where are th' impartial rules of justice flown,
" If lewd offenders cast the penal stone?
" And ye, my friends, who think the deed no crime,
" Why do ye mourn the unpropitious time?

" Have not my writings judged this weighty cause
" A sickly scion of corrupted laws?
" How needful, then, when dangers lurk around,
" That Luther, steadfast in his faith, be found!
" His own example scarce can fail to cheer
" Those doubting souls, enchain'd by servile fear.
" If lawless men the public walks infest,
" I take my chance, and suffer with the rest.
" See, at the post of duty, still I stand;
" My watchful eye directs my willing hand.
" Though of our noble patron's aid bereft,
" Some gen'rous souls among his race are left—
" Learning shall flourish, 'neath Thuringia's shade,
" When fleeting time has sheath'd the murd'rous blade!
" Then—oh my friends!—when rolling years have fled,
" And Luther joins the long departed dead—
" Then shall the mystic scroll of fate, unroll'd,
" The long conceal'd designs of Heav'n unfold:
" Each fearful cloud, whose darkening shade appalls,
" Each flash that strikes, or thund'ring bolt that falls,

" Dispers'd—shall leave a pure refreshing breeze,
" A cheerful verdure on th' enliven'd trees!
" Th' electric shock, each noxious blast consumes,
" Array'd in smiles, the verdant landscape blooms."

Such were thy feelings, Luther, need we trace
The further steps of thy eventful race?
A long laborious course before thee lies:
But high thine office—bright th' immortal prize!
Condemn'd to brave each rude, impending storm,
And strike the blow at falsehood's hydra form.
Still at the helm, to guide the reeling bark,
And speed its course, 'neath skies obscurely dark!—
To fight thy way, with heart and soul unchang'd
Midst unrelenting foes, and friends estrang'd.

In vain Erasmus, like proud Moab's seer,
Disowns the sect—his conscious thoughts revere.
No with'ring curse the recreant prophet brings,
See from his lips th' unwilling blessing springs.

Let gath'ring chiefs their promis'd vows recant,
And councils, still, revoke each lenient grant:
Let wary pontiffs urge the partial cure—
The tree corrupt must yield its fruits impure.
Let mild Melancthon waste his gifted powers,
And cull each flower from learning's classic bowers;
Whilst varied stores his fruitful mind displays,
Let true devotion warm his polish'd phrase.
In vain successive schemes are duly tried,
The gordian knot can ne'er be thus untied;
Whate'er their friends—whate'er their foes confess,
Such elements refuse to coalesce!
Truth must prevail, though error still deceives,
For *Antichrist* his deadly wound receives!

But, Luther—No!—thine eyes shall ne'er behold,
The blissful change maturer years unfold!
Thy work is done—th' appointed task complete—
A brighter scene thy gladsome eyes shall greet!
Unfading glories, soon, thy brow shall bind,
And earth's receding cares be left behind!

Mourn not for treasure heap'd beneath the skies—
Thy rich inheritance in safety lies:
No more thy faith on flutt'ring wing aspires,
Expectant hope in certainty expires!
Ye sorrowing friends, who sunk in grief profound,
With deep despair the bed of death surround,
Dry ev'ry tear—repress each bursting sigh—
If this alone be death—how sweet to die!
Through the dread valley's shade, to find at length,
The staff of Christ support exhausted strength!
Through ev'ry pang, that mortal fears endure—
To find the promised Word, an anchor sure!
A firm support in each conflicting pain,
—This is the dying saint's triumphant gain!!

NOTES.

NOTES.

PART I.

Note 1, page 8, line 136.

" One ardent spirit yet remains untir'd."

Martin Luther was born at Isleben in Saxony. He received a very liberal education, and made such proficiency in his studies that he commenced Master of Arts, at the University of Erfurt, at the age of 20. Contrary to the wishes of his father, he entered into a monastery of Augustine Friars, and was soon afterwards appointed to superintend the University of Wittemburgh, founded by Frederic, Elector of Saxony, surnamed " the Wise." For some years after his entrance into a monastic life, he applied himself, with great diligence, to the study of the Scholastic Divinity; but having accidentally discovered a Latin Bible, he was first led to suspect the principles of the Romish Church, by discovering that so many essential parts of the Scriptures were omitted in its offices. Being sent to the Court of Rome, to settle some disputes which had arisen amongst the Augustine Convents, he had an opportunity of witnessing the idolatrous state of the Romish Church, and the extreme profligacy of the Clergy. Educated in retirement, and unconsciously imbibing, through the writings of St. Au-

gustine, the principles of a purer faith, the virtuous indignation of Luther was roused by the practical abominations of the Papal system. About the same time the sale of indulgences was renewed in his immediate neighbourhood, and so warmly did Luther attack this evil that he soon raised a host of adversaries.

He held public disputations with the Pope's agents at Augsburgh, Leipsic, and Worms; but as he refused implicit obedience to Rome, as an infallible guide, these numerous controversies only ended in his final separation from the Romish Church. In the year 1524 Luther resigned the habit and title of an Augustine Monk. In the following year, he married Catherine de Bore, a Nun of a good family, who, two years before, had been taken by her friends out of a convent at Nimptschen. Perhaps no man has been more unjustly slandered than Martin Luther, for even his enemies have been obliged to confess that "he was more abundantly corrupt in his thoughts and sentiments, than in his life and manners." That he was neither a man of ungoverned passions, nor of violent conduct in the familiar intercourse of social life, is sufficiently evident, by the ample testimony which is borne to his frank, generous, and social temper.

The ridiculous stories which have been invented about Luther's contests with the devil, may have arisen from his following the allegorical fashion of the age, in depicting his spiritual conflicts, under those peculiar temptations incident to persons of an ardent temperament. Luther's intolerant conduct towards Zuinglius, the founder of the Helvetic Churches, is justly censured, as a lamentable instance of human infirmity in one who was, in general, so averse to every species of religious persecution.

Luther was universally allowed to be an elegant and impressive preacher, a lover of the fine arts, and so well acquainted with the energy and elegancies of his native tongue, that his translation of the

Bible is considered the standard of German Literature. He wrote a great number of works; but his religious opinions are more fully embodied in his controversy with the celebrated and vacillating Erasmus.

Luther was seized with a mortal disease whilst he was on a visit in his native country, settling some differences in the territories of the Earls of Mansfeldt, in the year 1546, in the sixty-third year of his age. He died exceedingly poor, leaving no legacy but his blessing to his family, and his enmity of Popery to his friends. His body was brought back to Wittemburgh, and interred with very great pomp; Princes, Nobles, and Students graced the procession, and Melancthon composed his funeral oration.

Note 2, page 12, line 216.

" Its fatal fury on thy partner's head,"

The most popular reason assigned for Luther's sudden retreat into a monastery, in opposition to the will of his parents, is, that as he was walking in the fields, with one of his most intimate friends, his companion was suddenly killed by lightning. Whatever may have been the precise nature of the event which influenced Luther's decision, it is certain that some sudden alarm induced him to make a vow, which the tenderness of his conscience, and the superstition of the age in which he lived, led him to consider more binding than the duty of filial obedience.

Note 3, page 18, line 326.

" Of unborn ages, and a distant race!"

The audacious Monk Tetzel boasted that he had saved more souls by indulgences, than St. Peter had converted to Christianity by his preaching. " A soul" says Tetzel in his theses, " may go to Heaven

in the very moment when the money is cast into the chest." The foundation of this system was believed to be this:—there was supposed to be an infinite treasure of merit in Christ and the Saints, which was abundantly more than sufficient for themselves; this treasure was deposited in the the Church of Rome, and was literally sold for money, at the discretion of that see, to those who were able and willing to pay for it. Few were found, who were willing to undergo the course of a severe penance, of unpleasant austerities, when they could afford to commute for it by pecuniary payments. As the Pontiffs had the power of canonizing new saints at their own will, the fund was always increasing, and so long as the system could maintain its credit, the riches of their Church, thus secularized under the appearance of Religion, became, as Dr. Milner observes, "a sea without a shore."—How much the spirit of Popery is altered during the lapse of three centuries, and how much the decretal of Pope Clement VI, differs, in its nature and object, from the bull lately issued by the present Pontiff, is left to the decision of those who have perused this valuable document, and who may be willing to purchase the remission of their sins, at so easy a rate as undertaking a pilgrimage to Rome, with the laudable intention of enriching the sinking patrimony of St. Peter.

PART II.

Note 1, page 27, line 436.

"*The simple followers of the Lamb once slain.*"

It has been thought singular that so rude a shock should be given to Popery by a single Monk, but we must recollect that the corruptions of the Church had been partially assailed, in the course of se-

veral preceding centuries, by Waldo of Lyons, Wickliffe, John Huss, and Jerome of Prague. The simple inhabitants of the vallies of Piedmont and Vaudois, as well as the United Brethren of Moravia, make it their highest boast, that they are descended from a race, which was never infected by the idolatrous practices and unscriptural views of the Romish Church.

Note 2, page 34, line 559.

"*The guarded passport frees from lurking harm;*"

The Elector of Saxony was determined, in the first place, that Luther should not be compelled to appear at Worms against his own will; in the next place, he would not allow him to stir a step without a safe conduct, and contrary to the suggestions of Luther's adversaries, he refused to write any letters of passport in his behalf, without the express commands of the Emperor; lastly, this sagacious Prince, anticipating some pious fraud, had the spirit to demand, and the perseverance to obtain from the Emperor, in writing, a renunciation of that detestable popish tenet, that "Good faith is not to be preserved with Heretics."

Note 3, page 34, line 571.

"*Then man may rage, and demons aid the strife,*"

The friends of Luther would have dissuaded him from appearing at Worms, (recalling the melancholy fate of John Huss). It was in answer to those tender remonstrances that the intrepid Monk made this memorable speech, "I am lawfully called to Worms, and I will go there, though there should be as many devils as there are tiles on the houses of that city!"

PART III.

Note 1, page 49, line 805.

" Bear witness, heaven ! with how much filial awe,"

Having, for many days neglected, through the intenseness of his studies, to recite the canonical forms, Luther, in compliance with the Pope's decrees, and to satisfy his conscience, actually shut himself up in his closet, and recited what he had omitted, with punctilious exactness, and with such severe attention and abstinence, as reduced his strength exceedingly, brought on nearly a total want of sleep for the space of five weeks, and almost produced symptoms of a weakened intellect.—Luther observes that when he first began the affair of indulgences, " he was so intoxicated and drenched in papal dogmas, that " he would almost have murdered any person who had uttered a syl- " lable against obedience to the Pope.—Others might adhere to the " Pope on the principles of Epicurus, but for himself—he was a sin- " cere believer."

Note 2, page 53, line 874.

" Some painful emblem in the chase," &c.

Luther, in writing to one of his friends, alludes to his having spent two days amongst the Hunters and Fowlers, but that the amusement became unsupportably painful, from the interpretations which he could not avoid giving to the symbolical scenes around him, and which represented to his lively imagination, a true picture of the Church, and the miserable condition of its members, ensnared by corrupt Theologians and artful Ecclesiastical Rulers.

Note 3, page 56, line 946.

"*And pensive genius weeps o'er Byron's grave.*"

Newstead Abbey, celebrated for its antiquity, now in the possession of T. Wildman, Esq. was built by Henry II. as an expiatory offering to the manes of the murdered Thomas a Becket.—The Monks remained in uninterrupted possession of the Monastery till the reign of Henry VIII. who persecuted them with unrelenting cruelty, and obliged them to abandon the place.—It was bestowed by this Monarch on Sir Thomas Byron, and sustained a siege during the Civil War. On the restoration of Charles II. its lawful possessor, who had shared the fortunes of his exiled Sovereign, was reinstated in his hereditary domain. It was sold to its present owner, by the late Lord Byron.

Note 4, page 56, line 955.

"*Shall artful foes the distant fortress seize,*"

The names of these fanatics, who pretended to have immediate and direct personal communication with the Deity—were Nicholas Stork—Mark Stubner—Martin Cellary—and Thomas Munzer.—The extreme gentleness and candour of Melancthon induced him to give these self-constituted Apostles an indulgent reception, till the appearance of Luther, whose keen penetration soon detected the imposture, and whose manly decision soon stripped them of their assumed importance, and destroyed their momentary influence.

Note 5, page 59, line 998.

"*The sacred version eager hands prepare.*"

During Luther's confinement at Wartburgh, he had studied the Hebrew tongue with persevering industry, and had besides, translated the whole New Testament into German.—He afterwards proceeded to

apply his Hebrew studies to the translation of the Old Testament, which he published gradually, and completed the whole in the year 1530.—In this book he was much assisted by the labour and advice of several of his friends, particularly Philip Melancthon and Justus Jonas.—The whole performance remains a monument of industry and learning. It was the custom of Luther and his friends to meet once a year, for the sole purpose of perpetuating the remembrance of their united labours; and this anniversary was denominated "The festival of the Holy Scriptures."

Note 6, page 62, line 1046.

"*The Swiss Reformer of celebrious fame?*

That Luther's conduct towards Zuinglius formed a melancholy contrast to his general character, may be inferred not only from his enlarged and liberal notions concerning toleration, but from his particular acts of forbearance and generosity. One of the most remarkable of these occurred in the year 1525.—a Polish Jew, a Doctor of Medicine, agreed to take away the life of Luther by poison, for 1000 pieces of Gold.—The Jew and his accomplices were seized and taken before the civil Magistrate—they refused to make any confession, and Luther entreated that they might be set at liberty, instead of being tried by torture, according to the custom of those times.

THE END.

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